

2013 OPEN SEASON OF THE EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES PROGRAM (EPAP): PART TWO - APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. SUMMARY: The Department is pleased to announce that coordination of the EPAP Program has been transferred to the Family Liaison Office and that the 2013 Open Season of the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP) has begun. This is the second cable of a two-part series on the EPAP program. The deadline for completing the Business Writing Test is February 28, 2013. The time frame for applying to the Program is from March 4 to 22, 2013.

Please read this carefully as there have been some changes in the program application process. This provides an overview of the program and explains application procedures for the second part of the process that includes submitting the application.

If you have taken and passed the Business Writing Test anytime between October 2008 and January 2013, you do not/not need to retake the Business Writing Test. Similarly, you do not/not need to reapply for the program if you applied previously and were found qualified in the areas you indicated an interest in at the time of your original application. If you wish to apply for positions in an area for which you were not qualified previously, you must apply. See paragraph 4(b).

2. PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- a. During the open season of the Expanded Professional Associates (EPAP) Program, Appointment Eligible Family Members (AEFMs) are able to apply for EPAP positions opening Now and in Summer 2013. (Note: This is not the annual hard-to-fill program. Civil Service employees are not eligible to apply for these positions. These are EPAP positions that have been specifically created for AEFMs.) Only those persons who meet the definition of an appointment eligible family member can apply to the program. (see paragraph 3a below)
- b. An EPAP AEFM may only be employed at the same city as his/her sponsoring employee. An AEFM whose sponsoring employee does not yet have an onward assignment for Summer 2013 may apply for the program by identifying specific categories, but without identifying a specific position; however, an AEFM may only be offered an EPAP position after his/her sponsoring employee has been paneled to a position at the same mission. AEFMs already present at post may also apply for a position provided that the sponsoring employee's tour of duty is at least one year beyond the AEFM's hiring date.
- c. Not all the positions advertised will be filled. More positions are being advertised than authorized in order to give maximum flexibility to both applicants and bureaus seeking good matches for the positions. Final hiring decisions will be made by the regional bureaus and posts taking into account staffing priorities and the number of qualified applicants.
- d. EPAP includes the following categories of positions: Political, Economic (includes Environment Science and Technology positions), Public Diplomacy, Management, General Services, Human Resources, Financial Management, Office Management, Information Management, Physician, Nurse Practitioner and Registered Nurse. All EPAP positions are at the FS-04 to FS-07 grade level.
- e. Further information, including a list of the positions available for 2013, the EPAP cover form, Evaluation Standards, Position Descriptions, FAQs and Salary Standards, is available upon request. Please email: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- a. In order to be eligible for the Expanded Professional Associates Program, applicants must be:

An Appointment Eligible Family Member (AEFM), as defined in 3 FAM 8212, of a career government employee from any agency under Chief of Mission authority currently or soon to be assigned to a full-time position at an overseas post.

An AEFM is:

- 1) A U.S. citizen; and
- 2) the spouse or domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1600) of the sponsoring employee, or a child of the sponsoring employee, who is unmarried and at least 18 years old; and
- 3) listed on the travel orders or approved Form OF-126 of a sponsoring employee, i.e., a direct-hire Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed services member who is permanently assigned to or stationed abroad at a U.S. mission, or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan, and who is under Chief of Mission authority; and
- 4) resides at the sponsoring employee's post of assignment abroad at a U.S. mission, or, as appropriate, at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan; and
- 5) does not receive a U.S. Government retirement annuity or pension from a career in the U.S. Foreign Service or Civil Service.

Other family members or dependents of direct-hire Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed service employees who are on travel orders or on an approved Form OF-126 who do not meet all of the criteria above are not AEFMs for purposes of 3 FAM 8200.

Same-Sex Domestic Partners must comply with the provisions of 3 FAM 1612, including the filing of the Affidavit of Eligibility for Benefits and Obligations (DS 7669). For more information please email: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov

Applicants do not need to have a security clearance at the time of application (see paragraph 7(a) below), but are required to obtain the appropriate clearance before a final hiring decision will be made. An interim Secret clearance will be sufficient for many EPAP positions but the level of the clearance for each position will be determined by the post and the RSO. The tour of duty of the family member's sponsor must be one year beyond the AEFM's hiring date, not the date of the conditional offer. If the AEFM cannot obtain the required clearance in time to comply with the one-year requirement, the bureau will rescind the offer of employment.

Family members of contractors are not eligible to apply. Members of the Civil Service who are not AEFMs also are not eligible to apply.

- b. All applicants must pass a Business Writing Test in order to qualify for any position in the program (see Ref B). In addition, applicants must meet the established specific qualification standards for each position as determined by a Qualification Evaluation Panel (QEP) convened by M/DGHR/FLO. For more information, please email: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov
- c. All applicants must commit to serve a minimum of one year in the position for which they are applying. The same is true for those who are already at the post where the EPAP position is being advertised. On the effective day of hire, the candidate's sponsor must have at least one year remaining of their tour of duty. Applicants may apply for EPAP positions that are open now and through Summer 2013.
- d. Applicants may be able to serve up to the maximum of their sponsoring employee's tour of duty, provided sufficient funding is available, the bureau wishes to renew the position, and their

supervisor documents their performance as satisfactory or better. As with any limited non-career appointment, there is an absolute maximum term of five years.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES:

- a. There are two steps to apply for the program:

Step 1 - complete and pass an online Business Writing Test. The Writing test must be completed by February 28, 2013. (See Ref. A)

Step 2 - submit a completed application package to FLO, per the instructions below, by March 22, 2013.

- b. Individuals who applied in any previous EPAP season and were found eligible by the QEP, but were not hired, do not need to reapply or retake the Business Writing Test. However, they must reconfirm their interest in an EPAP position by advising the hiring bureau in writing (see paragraph 11 for contact information). Further, they must forward an updated DS-1950 application for employment if their work history has changed since they last applied.

Individuals who did not pass the writing test in the past are welcome to retake the writing test. If they are notified by M/DGHR/FLO that they passed the writing test, they may resubmit a complete application package by the application deadline. Individuals who passed the Business Writing Test but were found ineligible by the QEP for specific positions should not reapply for the same type of positions unless their qualifications have changed. We encourage applicants to be realistic about what they may be qualified for and only apply for those positions.

- c. Applications must be scanned and sent electronically as a PDF file to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov. Submit only the requested materials. Any submission that is longer than 20 pages or that does not contain the requested information will not be considered. The following materials must be included in the submission and must be submitted in the following order:
- 1) Expanded Professional Associates Program application cover sheet in the format required can be requested by emailing: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov
 - 2) A signed and dated letter of interest explaining why the applicant is interested in the position(s) and why s/he feels qualified to carry out the job duties. The letter must include the following language: "I am applying for a position within the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP). My sponsoring employee, (name), is currently assigned to (post) until (month/year) and (if relevant) plans to bid/has bid on positions at (list posts) which open in (season/year). If I am selected for a position in the EPAP Program, I commit to serve in the position for a minimum of one year. I acknowledge that all leave requests must be approved by my supervisor."
 - 3) A DS-1950, Application for Employment can be requested by emailing: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov
 - 4) College or University transcripts. See (d) below for those with foreign degrees.
 - 5) Evidence of citizenship (copy of passport biographic page, birth certificate, or naturalization certificate).
 - 6) Copy of first page of sponsoring employee's travel orders or assignment notification showing applicant listed as EFM.

- d. Foreign Education Provision: Foreign education transcripts are no longer accepted. Foreign education must be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order to be credited towards qualification. Applicants can verify accreditation at the following websites or you can select any organization that provides this service. Most organizations charge a fee for this service.

<http://www.wes.org/>

<http://www.pmf.gov/become-a-pmf/eligibility/education-outside-us.aspx>

www.aacsb.edu

<http://www.ece.org>

- e. The application deadline is March 22, 2013. Applicants will be vetted by M/DGHR/FLO and notified whether they meet the minimum qualifications for a category of positions available under the Expanded Professional Associates Program. Qualification for a position does not guarantee an offer of employment. Offers of employment may be made thereafter, but only after the sponsoring employee has been assigned to a position at the same city. As noted above, AEFMs already present at post also may apply, provided that their sponsoring employee's tour of duty will extend at least one year beyond the EFM's start date.

5. EXPECTATIONS OF SELECTED APPLICANTS:

- a. Positions offered within the EPAP Program are professional-level, full-time positions. Only applicants who are interested in full-time, year-round employment should apply. Selected applicants may request accrued annual leave during the summer months and holiday periods. LWOP may be granted at the discretion of the post.
- b. All extended leave requests must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor at post and the regional bureau. EPAP AEFMs will be evaluated annually using form JF-57, Performance Appraisal for AEFMs.

6. SELECTION PROCESS:

- a. M/DGHR/FLO will convene Qualification Evaluation Panels (QEPs) to review submitted applications of candidates who pass the writing test. The QEP will evaluate each candidate as either qualified or not qualified for each category of position for which s/he is applying. Once the QEPs have finished their evaluation, M/DGHR/FLO will forward the applications of qualified applicants to all of the geographic bureaus. The FLO will also send each applicant electronic written notification of the results of their review. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the Standard Operating Procedures for QEPs for this program, posted on the HR webpage for the EPAP Program. This information can be requested by emailing: ApplyProflAssoc@state.gov
- b. Regional bureaus will make all final hiring and salary decisions. However, bureaus are not authorized to offer a position to a candidate until after the sponsoring employee has been paneled or it is verified that the sponsoring employee has a tour of duty that will permit the applicant to serve a full year. Applicants should bear in mind that not all positions advertised will be filled, as explained above. Veteran's preference will be applied in the selection process, consistent with the application of Veteran's preference in all overseas employment, as documented by HR/OE.

7. UPON SELECTION:

- a. Selected applicants are required to obtain the appropriate security clearance for the position by the time of their appointment. Those who do not hold active security clearances must inform the regional bureau or post Human Resources Office promptly after their selection. The post or hiring bureau will initiate the clearance process with Diplomatic Security but will require prompt cooperation and input from the candidate. The candidate may not be brought on board until s/he receives a minimum of an appropriate interim clearance for the position. In conjunction with posts bureaus, the Post's RSO will determine the level of security clearance required for the position and whether the incumbent may be appointed with an interim clearance. The clearance level required for each position and determined by post RSO is based on the duties and responsibilities of the position and is not based on the individual. As with any EFM overseas, EPAP AEFMs must be medically cleared for post. Applicants are reminded to update their medical clearances in a timely manner.
- b. EPAP AEFMs will be hired using the Family Member Appointment (FMA) mechanism. The regulations governing FMAs are contained in 3 FAM 8120.

8. SALARY, BENEFITS, AND ALLOWANCES:

- a. Salary will be determined at the time an offer of employment is made. It will be determined by a bureau HR Specialist based on the advertised grade of the position and the individual's educational background and work experience. The regional bureau's Family Member Employment (FME) Coordinator is responsible for authorizing the highest previous rate (HPR), if applicable. An AEFM that is hired under the Expanded Professional Associate Program will receive the FS Comparability pay as a "Direct-hire." An individual may not be paid at a grade higher than the advertised grade of the position which s/he will encumber. The Regional Bureau Coordinator may offer the position at the Training Level and the incumbent would be able to convert to the next grade after successfully completing 52-weeks at the Training Level. Conversion to FP-04 Full Performance Level (for applicable FP- 04 positions) will only take place after successfully completing 18 months at the FP-05 Training Level.
- b. EPAP AEFMs will accrue leave at the same rate as direct- hire employees. EPAP AEFMs will be able to pay into the Thrift Savings Plan, FEGLI, and FEHB, as well as FERS. They may also be eligible to receive Non-Competitive Executive Order 12721 Eligibility after 52 weeks of government service. EPAP AEFMs can receive over-time pay but it must be paid out of post funds and must be requested and authorized in accordance with post procedures.
- c. EPAP AEFMs are personally eligible to receive danger pay but no other allowances, differentials, or other benefits (including but not limited to post differential, temporary lodging, living quarters, transfer, home service transfer, education, and separate maintenance allowances, advances of pay, home leave, and rest and recuperation). They will not be granted any entitlements, such as shipment of household goods or housing, in addition to those already granted to their sponsoring employee. EPAP AEFMs at unaccompanied posts must be included on their sponsoring employee's travel orders and may not accept Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) once they have commenced travel to post.
- d. Please note that if you are currently in a civil service position, your appointment will be converted to a Family Member Appointment.

9. TRAINING:

- a. AEFMs hired under this program will be expected to take any related training courses at their own expense. However, if an AEFM is hired and already working and a post wishes to fund travel for an AEFM to take a course at FSI, salary will continue to be paid during the training period. If an employee has been selected for a position but has not yet gone to post, salary will not be paid during the training period. Training should be planned in conjunction with R&R or home leave travel when possible. Applicants should contact bureaus directly for information on recommended training for advertised positions.
- b. Some positions advertised may indicate a required or preferred language skill. Language training will continue to be provided to EFM's on a space-available basis only. Individuals selected for this program will generally have priority over other EFM's for language and functional training enrollment, but there is no guarantee that space will be available. Applicants should contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at FLOASKTraining@state.gov for more information regarding training enrollment.

10. AVAILABLE POSITIONS:

- a. A list of EPAP positions is available on the M/DGHR/FLO intranet site. If you don't have access to the intranet, please email: ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov
- b. This position list will be updated weekly and incorporate any changes that are made. These positions will not be advertised or bid upon via HR Online/FSBID since these are not FS positions.

11. CONTACT INFORMATION:

- a. If you have questions regarding specific positions, please contact the respective regional bureau HR representative:

AF/EX: Njeri Moore (MooreNG@state.gov)
AF/EX: Theresa Crawford (CrawfordTA@state.gov)
EAP/EX: Cynthia Coriell (CoriellCL@state.gov)
EUR/IO/EX: Brandon Coldwell (ColdwellBS@state.gov)
NEA/SCA/EX: Maura Forno (FornoM@state.gov)
WHA/EX: Matthew Meadows (MeadowsMC@state.gov)

- b. For questions concerning the application process, eligibility, etc., please send an email to ApplyProfAssoc@state.gov. You will receive an "Out of Office" message but the mailbox is monitored daily and you will receive a reply.